COTTON CHATS

DRAPER COMPANY, HOPEDALE, MASS.

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WE ASK A CAREFUL CONSIDERATION

of the following letter which was recently published in several papers. It makes clear the animus of the local strike which has been in operation about nine weeks up to the end of May.

Dear Sir:—

Some of the phases of the prolonged strike now in progress at the works of the Draper Company have seemed to me to be worthy of careful study and consideration.

Whatever justification the strikers may have had, or thought they had, it cannot be successfully denied that the conditions under which the men were working were as good as the best; and the pay which they were receiving was certainly as high, if not higher than that of other

men doing similar work in the same class of employment in any other factories in the world.

Under these circumstances, the reason for such a prolonged strike in this particular place does not seem apparent. It is true that the piece system has been generally introduced in our works, but this had enabled men who had formerly received the wages of day laborers, to get much better pay than they had formerly; and while we knew that there were individuals in the shop who did not like the piece system, we were satisfied that, on the whole, the great majority of our men did like it, and were opposed to its being abolished.

This strike, which started the first day of last April, and is still going on in full force, was by some seven or eight hundred men out of substantially 2100 or 2200 at work in the entire plant. These men who struck were scattered through various departments, but the bulk of them came from the foundry department, including moulders and helpers, and from the so-called "snagging" department.

One very pronounced and peculiar phase of the trouble is the fact that of all the men who struck, there were comparatively few who could speak the English language, and there were not more than thirty who were American citizens. The great bulk of the men who struck were Italians and Armenians.

Many of these men had worked for us for a long time; they had been faithful employees, and for the class of work in which they were employed, had made good wages; many of them owned their homes; a great many had substantial savings; and they all seemed to be law-abiding and peaceful workmen.

Something over a year ago the great textile strike at Lawrence took place, which was conducted under the auspices of the so-called Industrial Workers of the World, or as the organization is more generally known at the present time,—the I. W. W.

The strike at Lawrence developed many new features in this section of the country, in the sending away of children from Lawrence to other cities; in the display of force and intimidation by the strikers; and in threats of wholesale destruction of property, some of which threats were carried out.

The principles of the organization were proclaimed, and the strikers finally destroyed the good will of substantially the entire population of Lawrence because of their pronounced antagonism to many features of the American government; the renouncing of all belief in religion; and their general statement that they believed in no God or country.

This strike in Lawrence was almost entirely of non-English speaking people, comprising Italians, Greeks, Armenians, etc., most of whom had been in this country a very short time.

Soon after the end of the strike in Lawrence, men who had been affiliated with that movement began to come to Milford, where there was a large settlement of Italians, and began to preach the doctrines of the I. W. W. organization and endeavor to form a union of that order among non-English speaking employees of the Draper Company. This was kept up persistently for many months, and among others who spoke at Milford at different times, were Mr. Ettor and Mr. Giovanitti, the Italian leaders of the great strike in Lawrence, as well as several others well known to be members of that organization who had been connected with the Lawrence strike.

The most persistent person, however, among all those urging the organization among the Draper Co. employees was a man by the name of Coldwell, who was a photographer located in Milford, who had been in the town for some two or three years and who spent a large part of his time urging the employees of the Draper Co. to organize in the I. W. W., and preaching doctrines of socialism; while he had ostensibly left town to be a resident of the city of Worcester, two days after the strike started he returned to Milford and became the leader, and stayed in that position for something like six weeks.

For the last two weeks, or about that time, he has not been active as a leader, because of disagreement of opinion between him and two other men who are also leaders in the strike movement, and he has retired, temporarily at least, from his leadership.

Some of the principles of the I. W. W. ought to be stated. In their preamble they say among other things:—

"Between these two classes (referring to the working class and the employing class) a struggle must go on until the workers of the world

organize as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production, and abolish the wage system."

Another quotation from their preamble is as follows:

"Instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wages for a fair day's work,' we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wage system.' "

In the book which contains the preamble and the constitution, as well as the "tactics and methods" or methods of the I. W. W., the following statements appear:—

"The tactics used are determined solely by the power of the organization to make good in their use. The question of 'right' and 'wrong' does not concern us."

"No terms made with an employer are final. All peace, so long as the wage system lasts, is but an armed truce. At any favorable opportunity the struggle for more control of industry is renewed."

"The organization does not allow any part to enter into time contracts with the employers. It aims where strikes are used, to paralyze all branches of the industry involved, when the employers can least afford a cessation of work; during the busy season and when there are rush orders to be filled."

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"Failing to force concessions from the employers by the strike, work is resumed and 'sabotage' is used to force the employers to concede the demands of the workers."

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"In short, the I. W. W. advocates the use of militant 'direct action' tactics to the full extent of our power to make good."

These quotations are sufficient to show the aims and objects of the I. W. W. "Sabotage" as is well understood, is the destruction of property by men at work who are supposed to be loyal and efficient employees of the concern for whom they are working.

"Direct action" means the use of violence and intimidation and actual destruction of property, and sacrifice of life if necessary to bring about the results.

It was said for some time during our strike, that it was not an I. W. W. strike, but that it was simply a strike of several hundred men to better the conditions under which they worked; to abolish the piece system; and to get a minimum wage.

We had no great difficulty in establishing in the minds of all unprejudiced observers the fact that the strike was managed by the I. W. W. organization, and when Mr. Ettor and Mr. Giovanitti came to Milford with various other people, and made speeches and said, frankly, that it was an I. W. W. strike, all doubt as to this point disappeared.

Mr. Coldwell, who, as I have said, was the leader of the strike for some six weeks, maintained persistently that he was not a member of the I. W. W. organization, and he said that it was not an I. W. W. strike, but he failed to convince the people of the correctness of his views. Mr. Coldwell was a socialist, and had been a candidate for state office on the Socialist ticket, and had been a speaker at local affairs around the state of Massachusetts for some years in favor of socialism.

The point that I desire to make plain from now on in this article, is the connection of the I. W. W. with the Socialist political party. I have described correctly and temperately, I believe, the way the strike was brought about, and its organization.

At this point it is interesting to show the connection between the I. W. W. in this strike and the Socialists as a political party. The strike had been going only a comparatively short time when Mr. Morrill of Haverhill, the one socialist member of the Massachusetts legislature, went before the Committee on Rules, with an order requesting the appointment of a legislative committee to investigate the conditions in Hopedale, and the conditions of employment which existed in the Draper Company. The Committee on Rules appointed a hearing, and Mr. Coldwell, the socialist leader of the strike, went before the Committee on Rules, making an argument to bring about this investigation. He was the only person from Milford or Hopedale to appear at this hearing asking for the investigation, denied the fact that it

was an I. W. W. strike, or that he was one of the I. W. W. organization, and tried to get the Committee to order an investigation.

The Committee refused to recommend the matter to the legislature, stating that if any investigations were to be made, they should be made by the State Board of Conciliation and Arbitration which was organized for the purpose of investigating such matters; and that it was not the province of the legislature to interfere in such questions until that board should request action.

Shortly after this time, and early one morning, when men were being forcibly prevented from coming to their work by some of the strikers, a conflict arose between the strikers and some special police officers who were trying to protect the workmen. Shots occurred on both sides, and one of the strikers was killed. This created great excitement, and was most unfortunate, although the judge who conducted the inquest, has since decided that the police officer was undoubtedly acting within his legal rights.

Within two or three days of this unfortunate occurrence, there was a meeting of the I. W. W. held in Boston, at which an address was made by a minister from the town of Ware, Mass., by the name of Sawyer. In his remarks he referred to the strike at Hopedale, and condemned the Draper Company and the Drapers, but said that it remained "for Eben S. Draper (meaning myself) to give the lasting blanket of disgrace to his family; his arrogant brutality toward his employees will place him in a position where he will stand forever disgraced in the eyes of fair minded men. Thugs in the employ of Draper have shot in the back, in deliberate cold blood, the father and husband demanding decent treatment."

It develops that this Mr. Sawyer, who made this speech referred to, was a candidate for Governor of the Socialistic party in Massachusetts during the last campaign.

The strike at Hopedale has been attended by many acts of violence and intimidation. One car was "shot up" by four armed men, who stepped out of ambush and wounded one man badly, and put the lives of many innocent people in danger. People have been assaulted on their way to work; innocent men and their families have been

threatened; and many acts have been committed by large bodies of men which are absolutely unlawful, and absolutely against the principles of American citizenship.

Within the last two or three weeks it has become plain that many meetings for the direction of the strike in Hopedale and Milford have been held in rooms and headquarters of the Socialist party in Boston. Several prominent Socialist members of the state have been in consultation at these rooms, including Mr. Morrill, the legislator from Haverhill, where the means and methods by which the strike should be conducted have been talked over and decided on. Collections have been taken up by them in different sections to help support the strikers in their fight against the Draper Company.

Recently in Boston several socialist ministers of the Unitarian denomination, to which I have the honor to belong, met and, according to report in the Boston Transcript, adopted a resolution urging the Draper Company to arbitrate their differences with their employees.

I do not refer to this matter except to bring out the fact that they were the "socialist" ministers, and that the other people to whom I have referred were also socialists.

It therefore seems to me to be absolutely plain that the strike which is being carried on in Hopedale at the present time, is a part of the political propaganda of the Socialist party; that they are using the I. W. W. as their arm of "direct action," to create trouble and make dissatisfaction with governmental as well as industrial conditions, so that the change in government, which they advocate, may be brought about.

I believe that of the 700 non-English-speaking men who are on strike at our place, more than 600 believe that they are striking for changes in conditions in wages, while as a matter of fact they are being used by the I. W. W. for their personal ends, and the I. W. W. in connection with the Socialist political party, is using them in a brutal and cruel attempt to advance their own political principles, which aim at the destruction of society as at present organized, and complete change in government.

Among the men who are on strike, there are many who have obtained jobs from other people, or in other sections, so that they

might support their families, or that they might go somewhere else to live and work. In all instances where it is possible, these socialist and I. W. W. leaders have made these men give up their jobs and come back to become loafers in the town of Milford, so that they might be more effective in bringing about the defeat of the Draper Co. in this controversy. It certainly does not hurt the Draper Co. more to have these men loafing than it does to have them working for others, but it is cruel to the men, and hard on their families, and is apparently indulged in, in accordance with the old theory that "the devil finds work for idle hands to do."

I have written this long statement to try to make plain to the people what I believe to be the facts—that this strike was organized by and is being carried on by the I. W. W. as an organization; that this organization is an instrument of the Socialistic political party; and that three-quarters of the men who are on strike would be glad to go to work, under the conditions and wages that they formerly had, did not their leaders in the I. W. W. organization and the Socialistic political party, use their influence to prevent them.

EBEN S. DRAPER.

P. S.

It is well known that for many years the socialists have tried to obtain control of the American Federation of Labor, to use it as an instrument for political purposes, and that up to this time they have been unsuccessful. They seem to have taken possession of the I. W. W. organization, and are using it as their arm of "direct action" to bring about changed conditions of government and civilization.